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Black Conspiracy Theories 101: Church's Fried Chicken Will Make You Sterile?

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Jun 1, 2012 | By Ruth Manuel-Logan

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Conspiracy theories and urban legends are nothing new, and while they exist throughout all cultures, in the Black community, many of them have become legendary. Ranging from beliefs in diabolical plots of genocide with diseases, such as AIDS, and dead man walking, such as rapper **Tupac** surviving the hail of

bullets back in 1996, no topic is exempt.

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Obviously, once a conspiracy theory starts, it can pick up incredible steam, lasting for decades. Although there have been quite a few that have turned out to have some truthful beginnings, many experts believe that the more elaborate a conspiracy theory is — and the more people are involved — the less likely it is true, with these types of theories often discrediting themselves in the long run. Twice a month, **NewsOne** will look at some of the top urban legends in our community. Enjoy!

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Food conspiracy theories are pretty interesting. The famous **Church's Fried Chicken** chain has one associated it, and it originated in the mid-'80s. At the time, it was believed that the company was owned by White supremacist gang the **Klu Klux Klan** (KKK), who have always had a vendetta against African Americans.

Since it is no secret that the KKK hates Black people, it was allegedly thought that these haters tainted their chicken recipe with an ingredient that would render all Black men sterile.

Yes, you read that right.

The Church’s Fried Chicken chain was **started** by a San Antonio, Texas, entrepreneur named **George Church** in 1952. The business first began as a single run stand, but then it quickly gained popularity and branched out across Texas and eventually on to other states. Church’s son, **George Church Jr.**, took the business over in 1965, the same year that the company went public.

Author/folklorist **Patricia Turner**, who wrote “I Heard It Through the Grapevine” about **conspiracy theories**, says that the Church’s Fried Chicken myth seems to have been exacerbated by the fact that it located its franchises primarily in neighborhoods with high concentrations of Blacks. The chain also did little advertising as compared with other fast-food companies.

Furthermore, by being a southern-based company and offering a southern menu that commonly identified with the African-American home kitchen, Church’s had transgressed into somewhat sacred territory. Therefore, when people heard the rumor, they totally believed that the Klan was more than capable of carrying out such a well-devised and diabolical plan.

By the time Church’s was taken over by **Popeye’s Famous Fried Chicken and Biscuits** in 1989, the unfounded conspiracy theories had waned.

Still, this provocative conspiracy theory continues to be shared, with some authenticating the myth by swearing they saw this theory reported on television.

To this day, I — and I hang my head down in shame as I write this — will not allow any of my male family members to consume Church’s Fried Chicken!

Tell us!

Do you believe the Church's Fried Chicken conspiracy?

☐

Yes, I do.

☐

No, I don't.

☐

I've never heard of it.

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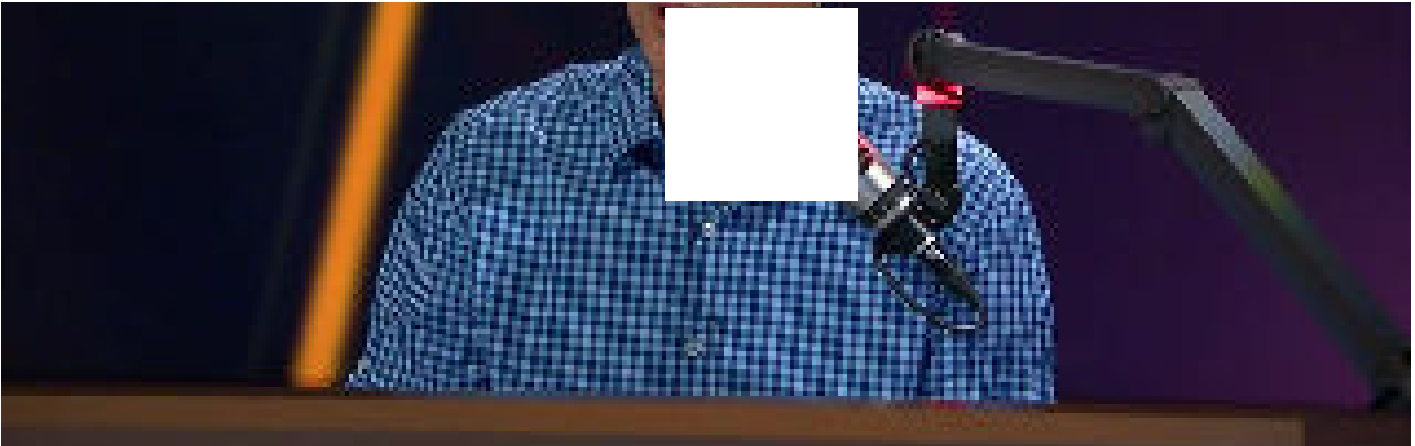
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